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BY ELMER TRUESDELL MERRILL

This letter was written by Decimus Brutus to Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius. It was evidently written in Rome, and not very long after the murder of Julius Caesar, which was effected on the fifteenth of March, 44 B.C. The precise date of the letter is in question. To enumerate the views of all the various editors and historical critics who have briefly or at length expressed their judgment on the matter would be tedious and useless. Most of them since the edition of Schütz (1812) have been content practically to follow him in setting down the date as the month of April. Otto Eduard Schmidt, in the able dissertation with which he inaugurated his career as an investigator of Ciceronian affairs, fixed upon April 5 as the latest possible date of the letter, and was certain that it could not have been written much before that day (*circ. Nonas Apriles*)—surely in the month of April, after Brutus and Cassius had left the city (*ineunte mense April.*).¹

Six years later Edmund Ruete, in his Strassburg doctoral dissertation, criticized the conclusions of Schmidt, and argued that the letter must date from the period (March 21–25) immediately after Caesar's funeral, when Brutus and Cassius were yet in Rome.² Prompted by Ruete's comments, Schmidt returned to the subject

¹ *De Epistulis et a Cassio et ad Cassium post Caesarem Occisum Datis Quaestiones Chronologicae*, Leipzig, 1877.

² *Die Correspondenz Ciceros in den Jahren 44 und 43*, Marburg, 1883.

again the next year,¹ but not to defend his former position. He had seen a new light in the study of Nicolaus Damascenus, and now argued that the letter was certainly written in the early morning of March 17. In this final decision he has been followed by Tyrrell and Purser in their joint edition of the correspondence of Cicero, and by others whom it is needless to name. P. Groebe in 1899 improved upon Schmidt and would assign the letter to the morning of the sixteenth of March, only a day after the murder.² Purser also in his Oxford text (1901) came around to the same day, and it is adopted in an able dissertation of recent date by Erich Becht.³ Ed. Schwartz held that the letter was sent from house to house in Rome, when the conspirators no longer dared to stir abroad.⁴ Such are the substantial varieties of opinion with which we have to reckon.

I venture to think that one or another of the debaters on this interesting problem has overemphasized certain of the arguments involved, and ignored or underemphasized others; and that none of them (unless my observation is at fault) has brought forward sundry points that appeal to me as of great weight in the balance, if not decisive against this or that view. Therefore, I trust that I shall not be considered to be altogether threshing out already beaten straw if I subject the topic to fresh consideration.

The *termini* in the case of this letter are evident on first reading as the murder of Caesar (March 15) on the one hand, and on the other the (apparently sudden and swift) departure of D. Brutus for his province (I think about April 12, but the precise date is of little importance at this stage of the argument; cf. below, p. 257).

1. The letter is written after the death of Caesar: but how soon after the death of Caesar must it be for *hoc nuntio de Caesare adlato* (§ 4) to have a proper sense? And does the phrase mean that Pompey and Bassus will be on a stronger footing "now that they have heard" or only "when they have heard" of Caesar's death? If the

¹ "Zur Chronologie der Correspondenz Cicero nach Caesars Tode," *Jahrb. f. cl. Philol.*, XXX (1884).

² Drumann-Groebe, *Geschichte Roms*, I², 411 ff.

³ *Regeste über die Zeit von Cäsars Ermordung bis zum Umschwung in der Politik des Antonius*, Freiburg i. Br., 1911.

⁴ "Die Vertheilung der röm. Provinzen nach Caesars Tod," *Hermes*, XXXIII (1898), 191, n. 4.

former, the letter must have been written toward its latest possible limit of time; for both men were insurgents, and Bassus was in Syria, and Pompey apparently was now somewhere in the hinterland of Spain. Days must have run into weeks before the news could reach them.¹ But if the phrase means merely "when they have heard" (as is indeed more likely), then there is little help for judgment in it, unless in the words *hoc nuntio*. *Hoc* would seem to imply a recent event. How recent? Necessarily only a day or two? But the circumstances of the time are most unusual, and the killing of Caesar such a prodigious thing, overshadowing all other events, and surely filling so much the largest place in the considerations of the conspirators and of Pompey and Bassus, that D. Brutus may well speak of "*this* news," whether he is speaking soon or as much as two or three weeks after the event. On the whole the *hoc nuntio* phrase gives no further help with the chronological question.

2. Does the sentence [*Antonius*] *aiebat neque arbitrari tuto in urbe esse quemquam nostrum* (§ 1) necessarily imply (as Ruete thought, but Schmidt apparently did not) that M. Brutus and Cassius were still in the city (*esse*=*remanere*)? If so, the date of the letter can be brought back some distance from its otherwise latest possible limit.

But there seems to be no necessary reason for attaching this limitation of meaning to *esse* here. For if M. Brutus and Cassius have already left Rome, they at any rate have no intention of remaining permanently away from the city. Their journey is hardly more than into the suburbs, as a temporary strategic retirement in face of the threatening attitude of the city mob. No known circumstances indicate that they did not purpose to return to the discharge of their functions as praetors, when once the hostility of the people was somewhat relaxed.² But in the mind of their correspondent the exclusive alternative to *in urbe esse* is not to go into (or remain in) the country, but to leave Italy altogether (§ 3, *cedendum ex Italia, migrandum Rhodum aut aliquo terrarum arbitror*), as voluntary quasi-exiles. Rome has become impossible: the only refuge is Rhodes (a popular resort for expatriated Romans) or some other distant place. That

¹ Cf. Bardt and Schmidt, cited below, p. 258.

² Cf. Plut. *Brut.* 21.

could be as naturally written to M. Brutus and Cassius temporarily lurking in the environs of Rome as to the same men yet tarrying in the capital itself. D. Brutus would of course recognize that no permanent suburban residence could be at all in possible contemplation as a compromise. Therefore the phrase *tuto in urbe esse* does not assist us in determining whether the men addressed were in or out of the city at the time, and hence is of no help in further limiting the date of the letter.

3. But does not at least the fifth section of the letter indicate that M. Brutus and Cassius are within easy reach—nearer than they would be at any of the suburban towns—so near that to this letter, which was evidently written in the morning (cf. § 1, *heri uesperī*, with § 5, *ante horam quartam*, etc.), an answer might be expected before the call of Hirtius, which D. Brutus looked for *ante horam quartam* (§ 5, *Rogo uos quam primum mihi rescribatis (nam non dubito quin de his rebus ante horam quartam Hirtius certiore me sit facturū) quem in locum conuenire possimus, quo me uelitis uenire rescribite)*? (Mr. Purser tries by punctuation to improve Brutus' rhetoric, but, I suspect, unjustifiably.)

As a preliminary to the answer to this question it must be remarked that D. Brutus writes with the incoherence of haste, or perhaps only of anxiety (note the repetition in *rescribatis . . . rescribite*, and the canceling of *quem in locum conuenire possimus* by the immediate correction *quo me uelitis uenire*). He asks for an interview with his friends, and a speedy interview. They need to talk things over. But are we to suppose that he wishes an answer to his letter, with an appointment for a personal consultation, and the consultation itself, *before* the imminent interview with Hirtius? This might, to be sure, be accomplished, if M. Brutus and Cassius were actually in the city, though it would leave little time *ante horam quartam* for so important and complex a canvassing of the entire situation as would seem to be demanded in view of the serious suggestions made by Decimus in the preceding part of the letter. And does he look for direction and advice with regard specifically to the approaching interview with Antony's representative? That seems unlikely in view of what he already had done, and of what he actually proceeded to do. He had already used his plenipotentiary powers in

behalf of his absent comrades, not to ask postponement of action till he could consult them, but to take the decisive step of requesting a *legatio libera* for himself and all of his fellow-conspirators. He proceeded to quite as independent an action. The letter was not despatched at all till after the interview with Hirtius (cf. § 6, which is clearly a postscript), and yet he makes no apology for the delay, nor gives any intimation that the main purpose of his note (*ex hypothesi* to hold a consultation before Hirtius came) had been in the slightest degree interfered with by the arrival of his guest earlier than he was expected. He merely announces briefly that this last talk with the other plenipotentiary had led him to change his request for *legationes liberae*, which meant removal from Italy, to one for residence of the *liberatores* in Rome under special police protection. It is therefore difficult, or rather, impossible, to conceive that, though he earnestly wished a speedy consultation with his friends, he wrote with the expectation or hope that it could take place before he saw Hirtius the second time; and there is accordingly no reason to conclude from this passage in the letter that they were in Rome at the moment, rather than outside of the city. The latter is clearly indicated. How then shall we explain his *nam . . . ante horam quartam*? With perfect simplicity: "Matters are pressing. We must shape our plans at once. Write me immediately to arrange a consultation, for no later than the fourth hour today I am to receive Antony's answer to my request, and we shall then have the full and final state of the case before us."

Indeed, other considerations natural in this connection force themselves upon our attention which indicate, not that M. Brutus and Cassius may as likely have been outside the city as within it, but that in all probability they were actually already outside. The first consideration is that if they had been inside, Decimus would most naturally have desired a consultation with them before Hirtius came the second time, or would have tried to postpone final decision till he could talk with them. (For if in the city, they were speedily accessible: Decimus simply asks, "Tell me at once where I shall come to see you.") But he does not so act. Therefore they were not quickly to be come at. That fits only a date after they had retired to the country.

The second consideration is that M. Brutus and Cassius were together and could be addressed in a single letter. But while in the city (after they quitted their leaguer on the Capitol) they would naturally be resident each in his own house. To assume that they were temporarily living together in Rome is to assume gratuitously for the sake of a specified interpretation of this letter a domestic arrangement not suggested elsewhere. But when they went into the country, it was because of their imminent danger within the walls; and they would naturally enough set out together and remain in close proximity for the sake of safety and of consultation on the pressing emergency.¹

A third consideration is that, if they were yet in the city, Decimus would have no occasion to ask where he could come to see them. For there is no suggestion elsewhere that they were in concealment; and if it be said that their houses were possibly watched, if merely with hostile eyes, the rejoinder is simple that their own exit to a rendezvous elsewhere would be quite as difficult and suspicious as the entrance of another man. But if they were moving about in the country from house to house, as was usual enough among Romans of their class, and perhaps specifically practiced by them now as a measure of greater safety, or if they had but recently left the city in a hurry, and their final destination was uncertain, Decimus would need to be informed where to find them, and might well urge haste all the more because considerable time must be taken by his messenger in tracking them down, and by himself in reaching them, after receiving the answer to his letter. Cicero himself, it will be observed, was evidently out of communication with M. Brutus, at least after leaving the city, and asks Atticus for information concerning his whereabouts.² It will be noted that Decimus does not expect them to come to him, but proposes to go to them, as he would most naturally do if they had already taken refuge in the country; for of course he would not desire them to return into danger, even for the sake of this important consultation.

A fourth difficulty is based on the question why, if M. Brutus and Cassius were present in the city, Decimus should have written

¹ Cf. of a somewhat later day, *Cic. Att.* xv. 11.

² *Cic. Att.* xiv. 7. 1; 8. 2.

to them at all, instead of going to see them at once, especially in such an emergency. As I have remarked before, there is no indication in the other ancient authorities nor in the circumstances that they were in hiding, even though they may have thought it advisable for their safety not to stir abroad without attendance.¹

A fifth consideration arises from the difficulty of understanding why Decimus should be applied to as an intermediary, if M. Brutus and Cassius were yet in the city. It was well known from the undoubted events of even the fifteenth of March that M. Brutus and Cassius were the leaders of their faction, and not D. Brutus. Moreover, within the next few days, in the course of negotiations, they were so recognized, and diplomatic conversations directed to and by them. Why imagine unnecessarily a change in relations such as made convenient the employment by them of a third party to represent (and with such a free hand!) their interests? But after all the other conspirators had been frightened out of the city by Antony's machinations, Decimus Brutus alone could safely remain. He had had no share in the actual murder, and he had a strong band of gladiators who had already been used to safeguard the tyrannicides, both at the hour of the murder, and later on the Capitol and in the Forum. Decimus, then, most naturally appears as the watchful resident representative of his absent friends. Antony's employment of Hirtius stands on a different footing. He himself was very busy with both politics and pleasure in the days after he had succeeded in ridding himself of the undesirable proximity of most of the tyrannicides. That was perhaps enough reason for acting through another person. But Hirtius was especially fitted to be a go-between in this case. He was an undoubted Caesarian, but a moderate man, known even to us as a good friend of some at least of the other faction, and one who had urged amnesty at the council of Caesar's friends the next day after his murder.²

In short, all the circumstances thus far examined either lead most naturally and inevitably to the conclusion that M. Brutus and Cassius were outside of Rome when this letter was written, or are at least patient of such an interpretation. If the force of the former

¹ Cf. Cic. *Att.* xiv. 5. 2; 8. 2.

² Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 27.

class of considerations is to be combated, certain circumstances must be imagined which are not at all to be deduced from the ancient sources, but are rather at disagreement with an impartial weighing of them. It is surely unreasonable to postulate violently *ad hoc* conditions that are at best of value only for a specifically predetermined chronology.

But nevertheless O. E. Schmidt, followed or even improved upon by others, finally claimed that the letter was certainly written on the morning of March 17, and in purposed anticipation of the meeting of the senate that was held that day in the temple of Tellus. M. Brutus and Cassius are known to have been at that time still encamped upon the Capitol. D. Brutus, Schmidt is forced to assume, must have gone, on the sixteenth, if not already on the fifteenth, to his own home in the city below, whence he writes to his beleaguered friends. Schmidt's positive arguments are neatly arranged to narrow down the date of the letter progressively from its latest possible limit to its precise moment. They run as follows: (1) the letter was written before D. Brutus departed for his province, therefore on or before April 5; (2) it was written before Caesar's funeral, for after the violence of the mob on that occasion directed against the houses of the tyrannicides, Decimus surely could have had no doubt about the accuracy of Antony's judgment (§ 1, *neque arbitrari tuto in urbe esse quemquam nostrum; adeo esse militum concitados animos et plebis: quod utrumque esse falsum puto uos animaduertere*, etc.); (3) it must be before the senate meeting on March 17, because after that there could have been no question about Brutus' province (§ 1, *se neque mihi provinciam dare posse aiebat*), since the senate then voted it; (4) a passage in Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 27, describing a consultation of Antony, Lepidus, Hirtius, and other Caesarians, held March 16, agrees point by point (*gedanke für gedanke*) with the expressions of this letter, and establishes inevitably a close chronological sequence between the two.

With (1) we may of course at once agree, unless perhaps on the precise day of April involved. But (2) raises an immediate question. In the first place, there were occasions later than the funeral of Caesar when the tyrannicides could justify themselves with considerable plausibility in the belief that, after all, the people were with them:

see, for example, the account by Appian (*B.C.* iii. 10: *καὶ ὁ τάραχος ἐπέπαντο, μῖσος δὲ ἄρρητον ἐξ ἄρρητου εὐνοίας τοῦ δήμου πρὸς τὸν Ἀντωνίου ἐγήγερτο*) of conditions after the quelling of the disturbances created by Amatius; and Plutarch's statement of popular feeling soon after Caesar's funeral (*Brut.* 21: *ἤδη δὲ καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἀχθόμενος, Ἀντωνίου σχεδὸν εἰς μοναρχίαν καθισταμένου, Βρούτον ἐπόθει*). And even if this were not so, Decimus might have regarded the riot at the funeral as not really indicative of public opinion, but merely a clever contrivance of Antony himself. Indeed, he immediately quotes Hirtius on his side. (I have no doubt that he bends the statement of Hirtius somewhat to suit his own prejudice; for all that even the conciliatory Hirtius probably remarked was something to the effect that the essential point was not after all the attitude of the people, but the fact that the supremacy of the tyrannicide party meant the suppression of the Caesarians; cf. the fears of certain members of the Caesarian council commemorated by Nicolaus, *loc. cit.*). It therefore does not at all appear that the letter must have been written before Caesar's funeral.

Schmidt's third point may be briefly answered, and that by an appeal to plain facts. The confidence of Decimus in the assured possession of his gubernatorial chair could not have lasted long after the meeting of March 17, for juggling about provinces did promptly begin and vigorously continue. It was very evident that Antony could not afford to have an opponent hold Gallia Cisalpina with an army; on the contrary, he had an eye on the province for himself, and his later operations regarding it are matters of history. How Schmidt could assert the point I have numbered as his third is quite beyond my comprehension.

The last, and evidently to him the most significant, argument rests upon the comparison of this letter with the latter part of Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 27. Nicolaus says that after the Caesarians had a bit recovered from their first confusion and terror, they held a council of war on the sixteenth to determine their future attitude toward the conspirators. Lepidus was for open hostilities to avenge Caesar's murder. Hirtius pleaded for friendly negotiations. Someone else (Schwartz suspects a proper name concealed under a textual error) sided with Lepidus, urging that to permit the murder to go

unavenged would be both shameful and dangerous to them; for however amiably the murderers might now conduct themselves, if once they acquired strength, they would go to extremes against all of Caesar's friends. But Antony threw his vote on the side of Hirtius, and it was determined to spare the tyrannicides. Some wished to have them granted a pledge of immunity, if they would leave the city (*ἀποπέμψασθαι ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑποσπόνδους*). Here the extant excerpt unfortunately breaks off. But I cannot see such a compelling coincidence in it as Schmidt at his second thought observed. Hirtius is, to be sure, here inclined to amity, but so he was also later than March 16. And was there not later than March 16 or 17 just as important a question of the attitude of the Caesarians under Antony's leadership, especially when the *liberatores* were actually forced to flee from the city for their lives? Surely in *ὑποσπόνδους* there can be no possible reference to a *legatio libera*, which would appear in the Greek in quite a different form.

Something should also be added about Schmidt's claim that the conversations of Decimus with Hirtius had immediate reference to the meeting of the senate on March 17. Not even if you assume everything else as proved in Schmidt's favor! If the negotiations between the two intermediaries concerned business to be brought that morning before the senate, is it not strange that no direct word of a senate meeting slips by Brutus' pen? And the hour of the expected message or visit from Hirtius does not agree with such arrangements; for the senate met regularly at daybreak (this particular meeting was warned by a call issued in the night; cf. App. ii. 126), and the fourth hour, or even *ante horam quartam*, would be quite too late for the previous diplomatic arrangement of its *agenda*. Furthermore, what did the senate actually do on March 17? Nothing at all like the things specified by Brutus; nothing at all of the arrogantly hostile character which his letter despondently prognosticates; rather it took action suprisingly favorable to the tyrannicides, agreeing perfectly with the decision reached in the Caesarian council as described by Nicolaus, but entirely discordant with the whole text and tone of Brutus' letter. Surely for a diplomat Brutus was lamentably unforeseeing! And yet Schmidt thinks Nicolaus and Brutus in perfect accord *gedanke für gedanke!*

Schmidt's argument, therefore, breaks down utterly in every particular. He was tempted, I suspect, to the pursuit of his late-appearing phantom by his new interest in the fragment of Nicolaus, to which apparently his attention in 1877 had not been directed, and more specifically by its mention of the plea of Hirtius for moderation, and by the word *ὑποσπόνδους*. But there is not the slightest allusion in Nicolaus to Hirtius as an actual intermediary (on the other hand, the ancient sources speak definitely of the internegotiations of these early days as conducted directly by messengers [not by Decimus] between the *liberatores* on the one side and Antony and Lepidus on the other, and they were not of the character indicated in the letter of D. Brutus), while *ὑποσπόνδους* appears to be misunderstood by Schmidt, as I have pointed out above. Instead of proving what Schmidt asserts, all of the particulars he dwells upon tend to indicate that, whenever the letter was written, it could not possibly have been written on the morning of March 17. To these considerations may be added yet others that weigh heavily against his contention.

No reader perusing the letter without prepossessions concerning its date, or knowledge of the complexities woven about it, could fail to perceive patent signs of the political circumstances surrounding its composition. Some of these I have had occasion to discuss above. Others may now be added.

In the first place, there is not one single word or intimation in the letter of any appeal to action by the senate. Yet the restoration of free political discussion and legislation by senate and people, as in the days before Caesar's dictatorial usurpation, was of the essence of that purpose which led to his murder. M. Brutus had attempted to address the senate immediately after Caesar fell, but his intention was frustrated by the terror-stricken flight of its members. It was proposed by the conspirators in their first consultations on the Capitol that Brutus and Cassius should ignore the consul Antony, and use their authority as praetors to convene the senate at once on that spot. This proposition was surrendered in favor of a more regular meeting at the summons of the consul, who surely could not be suspected at this time of thinking it possible to rule alone. His life had been spared through the urgency of M. Brutus, but though he could hardly have been considered entirely a negligible quantity, all

extant accounts of these first few days, and the logic of recorded action, including that taken by the senate on March 17, show that the *liberatores* did not yet consider him a powerful and implacable adversary, but even a possible ally. It is quite irreconcilable with the history of these days to imagine that on the sixteenth, or even on the morning of the seventeenth, D. Brutus or any of his party should not be talking of constructive action to be taken by the senate, the "restoration of the republic." Equally the extant accounts show Antony not at all sure of his position, but waiting to form his purposes after seeing what strength the faction of the murderers could develop. Not until Lepidus had hurried an armed force into the city could he have felt easy about even his personal safety. As it was, he went about in a cuirass. But in the letter circumstances are entirely different. There is no talk of the senate, but only of Antony. He is sure that he is in perfect command of the situation, and he is recognized so to be by the disheartened conspirators. They have no longer hope for liberty for the state, but only anxiety for their own lives. They have thrown up the sponge. Is it possible that this could have been their attitude on the sixteenth of March, or even on the morning of the seventeenth, or if it were, that the action of Antony, who in the face of their confessed surrender dares to tell D. Brutus that he will not permit him to have his province, and seems likely to refuse all protective measures in their interest, would have been so temporizing and conciliatory as it actually was in the senate meeting of March 17? An assignment of this letter to March 17 contradicts all known history. It could have been written only after Antony's personal power had been thoroughly established in his own eyes and in those of the *liberatores*. Their substantial recognition of defeat dates from the time of the retirement of M. Brutus and Cassius from the city. That was final surrender. That was the time when they must humbly sue through Decimus for the best personal terms that they could make with Antony. Their cause is dead; their own skins must be saved for a possible revival of it.

Again, the consideration pointed out by D. Brutus, and, as he says, conceded, if not suggested, by Hirtius (§ 1, *illud esse uerum, quod Hirtius demonstrabat, timere eum ne, si mediocre auxilium dignitatis nostrae habuissemus, nullae partes iis in re publica relin-*

querentur), appears to indicate that matters have progressed since the confused and unformed counsels of the first day or two after the murder. There is no longer any talk on the one side of the spontaneous new birth of liberty, nor on the other of vengeance on Caesar's assassins. Out of the chaos has had time to crystallize a question of "practical politics." Two factions are rivals for the control of the state. If one is to rule, the other must go under. The recognition of this as the real issue must clearly date from a later period than the first day after the assassination.

Furthermore, D. Brutus assures Marcus and Cassius that the disposition of Antony is malignant and treacherous (§ 1, *pessima et infidelissima*). Now a man cannot be intelligibly accused of being treacherous, unless he has broken, or is plainly intending to break, an obligation that clearly rests upon him. If no *fides* has been in any way pledged, there can be no treachery in any freedom of action. Surely Antony on March 16 stood in no relations of *fides* toward the assassins. But after the senate meeting on the seventeenth things were on a different footing. A failure to observe the stipulations of the treaty of peace and amnesty then sealed would lay the consul open to the charge of treachery. Certainly, then, the first interview with Hirtius could not have taken place on March 16, but must have been some time later, when Antony had strengthened his position, and was clearly disposed to disregard (as he actually did) the compromises forced upon him by earlier circumstances. The letter, then, could not possibly have been written on the morning of the seventeenth.

A closely connected point with regard to the very next sentence of the letter looks in the same direction. The most immediately flagrant item in Antony's treachery appears to be to Decimus the fact that he says, "I cannot give you the province." Now it may be (though I should hardly have thought it probable) that in the mind of Decimus the most important thing, even on such a critical day as March 16, was to make sure that the province to which he had been appointed by Caesar was not to be lost by his death; and to that end the good will of the surviving consul might be useful. But is it likely that on a day of such great uncertainty about his own position Antony, if approached, would have dealt this uncompromisingly

blunt rebuff to the one man of the other faction who had a strong band of gladiators at command? or would have spoken as if his own will, supported by popular feeling, were to be the sole arbiter in such matters? This action would have been out of harmony with all else we know of his tentative methods at this uncertain crisis. Surely the reply must come from that later time, when Antony was clearly in the saddle, and indisposed, as we know, to consider the question of the provinces *causa finita*.

And especially, if the letter had been written on the morning of the seventeenth, there could have been no reason for Decimus to ask where he should go to meet Marcus and Cassius. They were known to be encamped on the Capitol, and their friends and sympathizers were freely passing back and forth between them and the city. Decimus could have gone straight to them, like the rest of the world, as his own letter indicates that his movements were not impeded in any way; nor is there the slightest intimation of the need of a secret interview, apart from the other conspirators, or any conceivable reason for it. Of course, then, the letter could not have been written on the seventeenth.

Schmidt was indeed violating all probability in assuming, for the necessary support of his impossible theory, that Decimus was on the sixteenth and seventeenth in his house in the city. The conspirators in a body marched to the Capitol on the fifteenth, and the gladiators went with them. They, with the slaves of the conspirators, acted as the garrison there, and escorted thence and back again the orators who went down to address the people in the Forum. Decimus doubtless went with his troop to the Capitol and stayed there with them as long as his colleagues remained. There was no need for his risking his life in the city, except for the convenience of Schmidt's theory.

For all these many reasons, therefore, it appears to me absolutely impossible that the letter should have been written as early as March 17; and a fortiori it could not have been written, as Groebe argued, a day yet earlier, so that I may spare the reader an examination of his plea for March 16.

The only possible date, then, that agrees with all recognized indications, and meets all chronological or other difficulties, is one

after M. Brutus and Cassius had gone into the country. But when did they go?

The ancient sources substantially agree that the *liberatores* lost courage and fled the city at the time and in consequence of the popular disturbances at Caesar's funeral. Nicolaus (*Vit. Caes.* 17) appears to say that Antony, guaranteeing their protection, got them away to Antium before the mob attacked their houses; and this possibly agrees with the other authorities, who represent the houses as defended by their slaves and neighbors, but do not speak of the owners as sharing in the operations. But Appian, who in one place (ii. 148 [615]) says that the murderers fled at this time, yet later (iii. 2 [4]) distinctly states that M. Brutus and Cassius, being praetors, remained in town after the others, and until the riots led by Amatius, who indeed laid plans to capture them (iii. 3 [6]). Appian's former statement must evidently be corrected by this; for this agrees distinctly with our contemporary authority, the letters of Cicero.

When Cicero left Rome for the country (April 7; cf. *Att.* xiv. 1), M. Brutus was still in the city. For on April 11 (*Att.* xiv. 5. 2) Cicero comments on the report from Atticus that the *liberatores* are *tantum modo laudari atque amari sed parietibus contineri*. I am quite unable to agree with Schmidt that this might refer to their experiences in the country. But even if it could so refer, Brutus is apparently still in Rome, for the next day (April 12) Cicero remarks briefly on an apparently friendly interview that *heroes nostri* have just had with Antony, and Antony surely was in the city (though Schmidt tries to argue that he may have come outside). On the fifteenth of April Cicero tells Atticus a report has reached him that Brutus has been seen in the neighborhood of Lanuvium, and asks *ubi tandem est futurus* (*Att.* xiv. 7. 1); but apparently puts little credence in the rumor, since later in the same day, writing from Sinuessa, he expresses his pleasure that the action of Antony concerning Amatius is approved by Brutus, and adds *de Bruto semper ad me omnia perscribito, ubi sit, quid cogitet*, expressing the hope that now it is safe for Brutus to go about the city unguarded (*Att.* xiv. 8. 2). But four days later (April 19) Cicero appears assured that Brutus is at Lanuvium, and has been driven there by hostility in the city. Therefore the earlier report that he had been seen near Lanuvium was probably true.

Then he must have left the city not later than April 12. This would leave about the minimum time for Brutus to arrive at Lanuvium, and the first report thereof to reach Cicero at Formiae, where he then was. He may well have left a few days earlier, without Atticus being promptly informed of the fact. In favor of setting the date of Brutus leaving the city as about April 9 is the consideration that the news from Lanuvium is apparently not sent express by messenger, but brought by a casual passer-by; that needs a considerably greater time allowance (Cicero himself did not move very rapidly from place to place on this trip). Against it stand possibly the mention of the *colloquium* with Antony (*Att.* xiv. 6. 1, April 12), and the report of the approval of his action by Brutus. But the latter may just as well have come into the city from Lanuvium and thence been relayed by Atticus to Cicero, while the former is not too late for dispatch on or before April 9, allowing three days for the letter of Atticus to reach Cicero at Fundi; or it may be merely a later reference by Atticus to an earlier conference. The dates, indeed, appear to be in favor of this explanation; for only about thirty-six hours lie between Cicero's receipt of the letter from Atticus mentioning the *colloquium* (dinner-time, April 12), and the writing of that (morning, April 14) in which he says he has heard of Brutus at Lanuvium. If the report about Brutus was (as it seems to be) true, thirty-six hours is altogether too little time to allow for Brutus to move from Rome to Lanuvium and the chance news of his arrival to reach Cicero. And if, as is quite as likely, the news reached Cicero, not when he was writing on the morning of the fourteenth, but the day before, when he apparently wrote no letter to Atticus, the time-condition is even more unfavorable. In all probability the *colloquium* was held at least a day or two before Atticus wrote about it (he may not have heard of it promptly; or else his letter may have taken a longer time than usual on the way to Cicero).

I am inclined to believe, therefore, that Brutus (and Cassius) probably left Rome April 9—only two days after Cicero himself. This date would agree also with the outbreak of disturbances led by Amatius, be concordant with both Appian and Cicero, and disagree only with perhaps Cic. *Ad Brut.* i. 15. 5 (written more than a year after the events), where Cicero says that M. Brutus and Cassius

abandoned the idea of staying in Rome before he did. But I agree most emphatically with those who hold Cicero to be plainly referring (as the context shows) to the final abandonment of Rome for foreign lands. He is speaking of the city in the same sense precisely as that in which I understand D. Brutus to refer to it in the letter under discussion (*ut supra*, p. 243).

I therefore understand the main events of these few days to run somewhat as follows. M. Brutus and Cassius, helped by the advice of Antony, who wanted to get them out of the city like the rest, and used the riots of Amatius as a pretext, retired from Rome to Lanuuium on April 9,¹ leaving Decimus, their least offensive and best-guarded partisan, to represent their interests with Antony. Antony, having got them out, meant to keep them out; and hence when Decimus, on the evening of the day of their flight, held his first interview as plenipotentiary with Hirtius, he found to his dismay that there was no hope of concessions from Antony, not even with regard to the longed-for province. Next morning (April 10) he wrote this agitated letter,² and followed it up probably by the desired interview at Lanuuium or nearer Rome. This could hardly have been held earlier than April 11. By the consultation the shattered nerves of Decimus were somewhat braced. The council decided that he should forthwith fly swiftly to Gallia Cisalpina and take command, creating a *fait accompli* for Antony to deal with. He started at once, doubtless accompanied by as few attendants as possible. There is no reason for supposing that he took with him all the gladiators he had, whom Appian mentions as a part of his later Gallic army (iii. 49 [201]). For his safety, and that of his cause, depended mainly on his speed, and he was going to troops who had already served under his command and were devoted to him.

¹ Nicolaus, to be sure, says (*Vit. Caes.* 17) that Antony got the tyrannicides away to Antium at the time of the funeral riots, and Plutarch also (*Brut.* 21) mentions Antium as their first stopping-place, pending a contemplated return to the city when a favorable opportunity offered. Both statements are probably due to the fact that Antium did become within a short time their headquarters (cf. Cic. *Att.* xv. 11) and, this temporary stay at Lanuuium passed unnoticed. Of the confusion in the accounts between the mass of the conspirators and their heads I have already spoken.

² There is not the slightest reason for supposing, as Becht in his dissertation holds, that Decimus is replying to a letter from M. Brutus and Cassius; and the form of the opening sentence is against this notion.

How long would it take him to reach Gaul? In January, 49, when Piso, the censor, and Roscius, the praetor, offered to carry certain word from Rome to Caesar in the same province, they asked for the round trip six days. That, to be sure, doubtless under the circumstances meant very swift traveling, but there is no reason to believe, by comparison with other known rates of speed, that it could not have been accomplished. D. Brutus had an even more urgent reason for celerity. He must not be overhauled or anticipated by Antony. If he used haste, he could certainly have reached the province by April 15. Word of his arrival was brought back to Rome, reaching there on the nineteenth (*Att.* xiv. 13. 1, 2). The allowances of time fit well enough throughout. (On the actual speed of letters in this period see Bardt, *Quaestiones Tullianae*; Schmidt, *De epistulis et a Cassio*, etc.; Ruete, *op. cit.* It is not necessary to suppose that Decimus had arrived at more than the borders of his province, when he sent back the joyful news of the success of his *coup*. *De D. Bruti aduentu ad suas legiones* (*loc. cit.*) is perhaps merely rhetorical; for later remarks of Cicero show that the command of these legions is the one important element in the movement. The words of Cicero characterizing the news as *magna et mihi iucunda* agree best with the idea that the departure of Decimus had been so swift and secret that Cicero had no previous inkling of it. If he had known of the departure, certainly he would have remarked upon it in his almost daily letters to Atticus. But Cicero was not in communication with M. Brutus. I fancy that Brutus did not care for Cicero's lachrimose assistance in consultation, any more than he had wanted him in the original conspiracy.)

I have tried to show (1) that Cic. *Fam.* xi. 1 could not have been written on March 16 or 17; (2) that it could not have been written while M. Brutus and Cassius were in the city, but must be dated after they had gone out to Lanuvium; (3) that they left Rome later than Cicero, and in consequence of the Amatius riots; (4) that the specific date of the letter was probably April 10. The chronological outline is substantially as follows:

March 15—Caesar assassinated.

March 20—Caesar's funeral. Riots, and flight from city of most of conspirators.

- April 7—Cicero leaves city.
April 8—*Colloquium* of Brutus and Cassius with Antony.
April 9—Threatening difficulties with Amatius. Brutus and Cassius retire to Lanuvium.
[Evening] Hirtius calls on D. Brutus.
April 10—Second call of Hirtius. Letter of D. Brutus to principals.
April 11—Consultation of D. Brutus with principals outside of the city.
April 12—D. Brutus sets out for Gallia Cisalpina.
April 19—News of his arrival reaches Rome.

Of course the events from April 8 to April 12 might be set back a day, and thus leave a wider margin of time for the rush of Decimus to his province, while yet putting the departure of M. Brutus and Cassius later than that of Cicero. But *Att.* xiv. 5. 2 is rather against this.¹

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¹ In the attempt to shed a brief gleam of parting gaiety over the preceding dull argument, I cannot deny myself the amusement of adding as a postscript the magisterial words of Ferrero (*Greatness and Decline of Rome*, III, 317): "Schmidt deserves the greatest credit for his discovery (the term is by no means too pretentious) that this letter was written on the morning of Mar. 17 before the senatorial session; it is but rarely that a historian of antiquity sees so clear a ray of light illumining the darkness amid which he journeys through the distant past. The date given by Schmidt is as certain as if it had been written at the foot of the letter, *because it is the only date possible*. It is true that there are historians who regard this letter as belonging to the end of March or the month of April, but they merely display their lamentable ignorance of the history of this period."